Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton
Municipalité régionale d' Ottawa-Carleton

Inter-Departmental Correspondence
Note de Service

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Introduction

In 1987, the Region entered into an agreement with the Ontario Ministry of Housing to develop jointly with the City of Ottawa a housing information system designed to monitor the characteristics of, and changes in, the stock of rental housing. The project was funded by the Ministry of Housing.

As the system is now operating at the Region, the purpose of this report is to summarize, for the information of Planning Committee, the functioning of the Regional Housing Information System and initial results produced to date.

Background

Following resolutions by Planning Committee and Council in 1986, the Region applied for funding under the Ministry of Housing's newly-created Municipal Building Profile Program. The Program provides up to $20,000 to municipalities to enable them to measure the use, type and other characteristics of rental housing in their areas as well as changes to the rental stock through conversions, demolition and new construction. The City of Ottawa also made application under the Program, and the province took the unusual approach of approving joint grants to enable both Ottawa-Carleton and the City of Ottawa to undertake the work jointly. In May 1987 both parties signed agreements with the Minister of Housing to develop a joint system.

The project involved extensive and very successful collaboration between City and Regional staff to ensure that results were compatible and met the needs of each participant. The City's system provides additional detailed information not required at the regional level and is designed to work in conjunction with their Development Information System, while the Region's system provides a more general view of housing across all municipalities.

Initial results and a description of system operation was presented to staff of area municipalities at a recent meeting of the Regional Interagency Data Exchange (R.I.D.E.) group. Results of any of the standard reports are provided at no charge to municipalities. Access to the detailed records is also available to local staff provided they assume responsibility for any required computer programming.

Overview of the System

The Regional Housing Information System is based on property tax assessment information maintained by the Ministry of Revenue for the eleven member municipalities of the Region. These computerized files contain a large volume of information on the physical characteristics of housing in the Region, in addition to demographic data on residents. Consultants were hired to write computer programs to produce:

1. A "Regional Housing File" for each assessment year. This contains housing and demographic information for each property in a more compact and structured format than the original assessment records. To date, files have been created for 1985, 1986 and 1987.

2. A series of standard reports that can be run against individual years to summarize housing information; and

3. Comparisons between different years to assess changes in housing type, tenure and occupant characteristics resulting from conversion, demolition and construction activity.

Initial Results

The system provides a large amount of information which will be analyzed in greater detail during the preparation of the Regional Housing Statement Update in 1989. A summary of information on rental housing in Ottawa-Carleton is provided below.

a) Rental Housing in 1987

In 1987, 118,150 dwelling units in Ottawa-Carleton were in rental tenure, representing almost 50% of all units in the Region. Although 75% of this rental stock was located in Ottawa and Vanier, sizable proportions of the housing in Nepean, Gloucester, and Kanata were rented (Table 1).

Table 1 Distribution of Rental Units in Ottawa-Carleton

Municipality	Rental Units	Total Units	% Rented
Ottawa	82,319	133,260	61.8
Vanier	6,207	8,604	72.1
Rockcliffe	115	711	16.2
Nepean	13,506	33,786	40.0
Gloucester	10,052	29,275	34.3
Kanata	2,072	9,337	22.2
Cumberland	1,678	8,969	18.7
Goulbourn	665	4,282	15.5
Osgoode	598	3,703	16.2
Rideau	461	3,401	13.6
West Carleton	479	3,976	12.0
TOTAL	118,150	239,306	49.4

Ottawa-Carleton's rental stock is spread across a wide variety of housing types. Only half of all units are located in rental apartment buildings with six or more units (Table 2). About 28% of rentals are contained in row and semi-detached housing. Other data (not displayed in the table) reveals that among occupied condominium dwellings, 52% of row condominiums and 32% of apartment condominium units were rented in 1987. These units, many of which are owned by investors and managed as tax shelters, may convert to owner-occupancy when the tax benefits are depleted.

Table 2 Rental Units by Housing Type: RMOC 1987

Housing Type	Rental Units	% of Total
Single Detached	7,186	6.1
Attached	10,437	8.8
Duplex	391	0.3
3-6 Plex	10,223	8.7
Row, rental	12,587	10.7
Row, condominium	9,681	8.2
Apartment, rental	58,314	49.4
Apartment, condo.	2,438	2.1
Other	2,931	2.5
Unspecified type	3,964	3.4
TOTAL	118,152	100.0

Among household types, a disproportionate share of the Region's single parents (80%) and single persons (74%) occupy rental housing. About 73% of single people 65 and over are renters. Due to the distribution of housing type and tenure, as well as locational preferences, a large number of these rental households reside in Ottawa and Vanier (76% of renter single parents, 85% of single persons, and 89% of single elderly).

b) Construction, Demolition and Conversion of Housing, 1986-87

Changes between 1986 and 1987 were initially analyzed to ensure that the system functioned properly. Information for 1983 will be compared against 1988 data when these become available to permit a more comprehensive five-year analysis.

Demolition and conversion activity often goes unnoticed in the reporting of housing activity, due partly to the difficulty of assembling the required data. However, changes to the existing housing stock can be significant. For example, during 1986-87 Ottawa-Carleton gained almost 6,600 housing units from new construction (based on assessment records). After accounting for demolitions and conversions, however, the net increase to the Region's housing stock was about 5,850, 11% less than new construction (Table 3). Despite a net gain of 90 units from conversions within existing residential buildings, close to ten times as many units were lost from demolitions and conversion to non-residential uses. Almost 1,600 rental and vacant units were lost due to demolition and conversion, while conversions resulted in a gain of 898 owner-occupied units (Table 3). In new construction, it is noteworthy that 40% of the 2,046 rental units were in condominium buildings.

Table 3 Gains and Losses by Tenure Type: RMOC 1986-87

Tenure	New Construction	Lost Properties	Conversions	Net Change
Own	3,312	- 63	898	4,147
Rent	2,046	-645	- 38	1,363
Vacant	1,239	-132	-770	337
Total Units	6,597	-840	90	5,847

Gains and losses by municipality are shown in Table 4 for all units (owner, renter, and vacant). This reveals significant variations between new housing construction and net unit gains between 1986 and 1987. In Ottawa, for example, the net increase in housing units amounted to only 77% of new construction volume. Gloucester, Vanier and West Carleton also experienced relatively low net gains, amounting to about 87% of new building. A longer-term picture of the cumulative impact on local/regional housing markets will emerge when 1983-88 data is analyzed using this technique.

Table 4 Gains and Losses by Municipality: 1986-87

Municipality	New Construction	Demolition and other Losses	Conversions	Net Gain
Ottawa	1,909	-534	96	1,471
Vanier	146	- 14	- 5	127
Rockcliffe	59	- 2	0	57
Nepean	1,230	- 12	- 2	1,216
Gloucester	1,398	-196	- 7	1,195
Kanata	541	- 6	5	540
Cumberland	563	- 17	6	552
Goulbourn	292	- 23	0	269
Osgoode	193	- 16	2	179
Rideau	104	- 6	2	100
West Carleton	162	- 14	- 7	141
Total Units	6,597	-840	90	5,847

Future Developments

Aside from its applicability to the Regional Housing Statement Update, the Regional Housing Information System offers benefits in other areas, principally as a monitoring tool for the new Official Plan and for the Annual Housing Review. In the longer term, the system will form an essential part of the information to be used by the Geographically Referenced Information System (GRIS) to be developed by the Region in cooperation with area municipalities.

However, data quality remains a concern if the system is to be relied upon to produce timely and accurate housing information. Regional staff are seeking the cooperation of the local Ministry of Revenue assessment office in improving the accuracy of structural data on housing. The improvement of demographic information is a major challenge, and one that may only be adequately addressed by instituting the system in use in Alberta of an annual province-wide demographic census.

This report is for the information of the Planning Committee and Council.

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